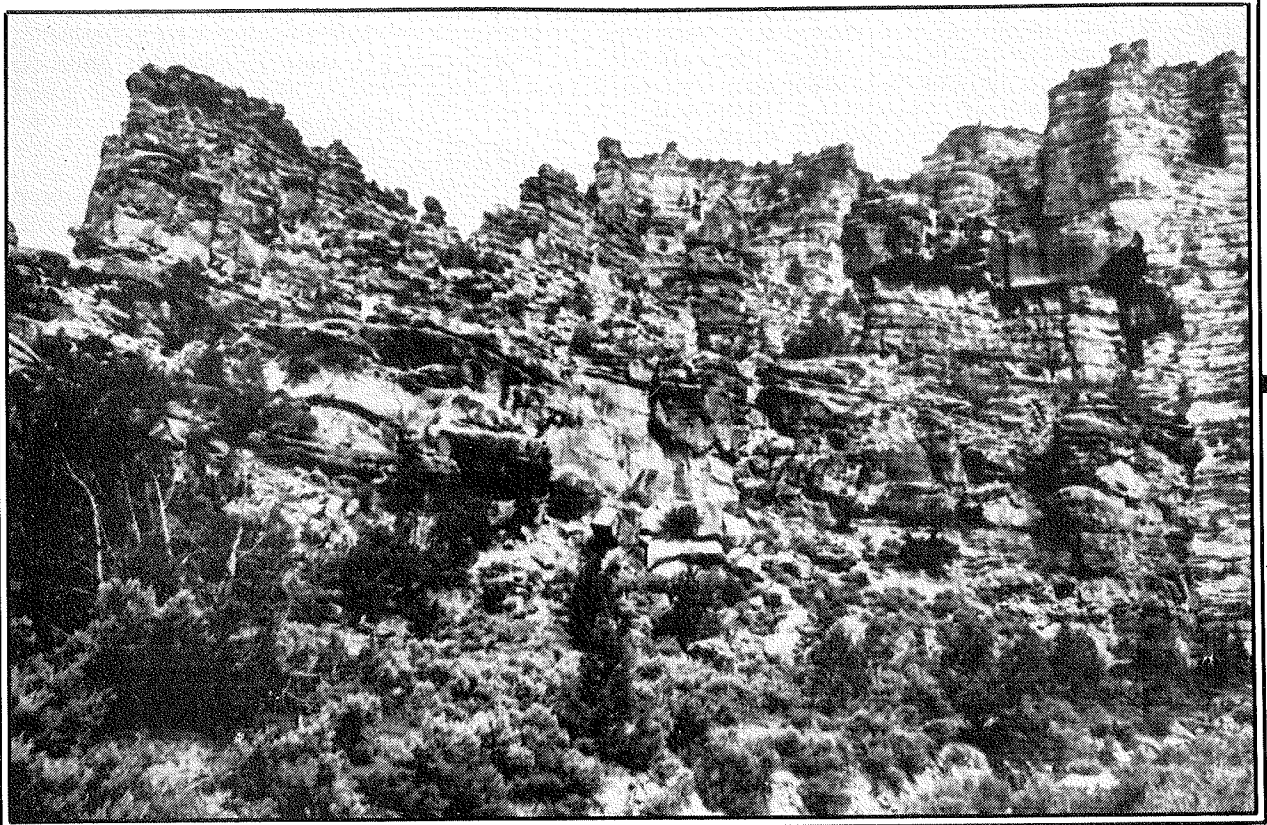


Jack Canyon WSA



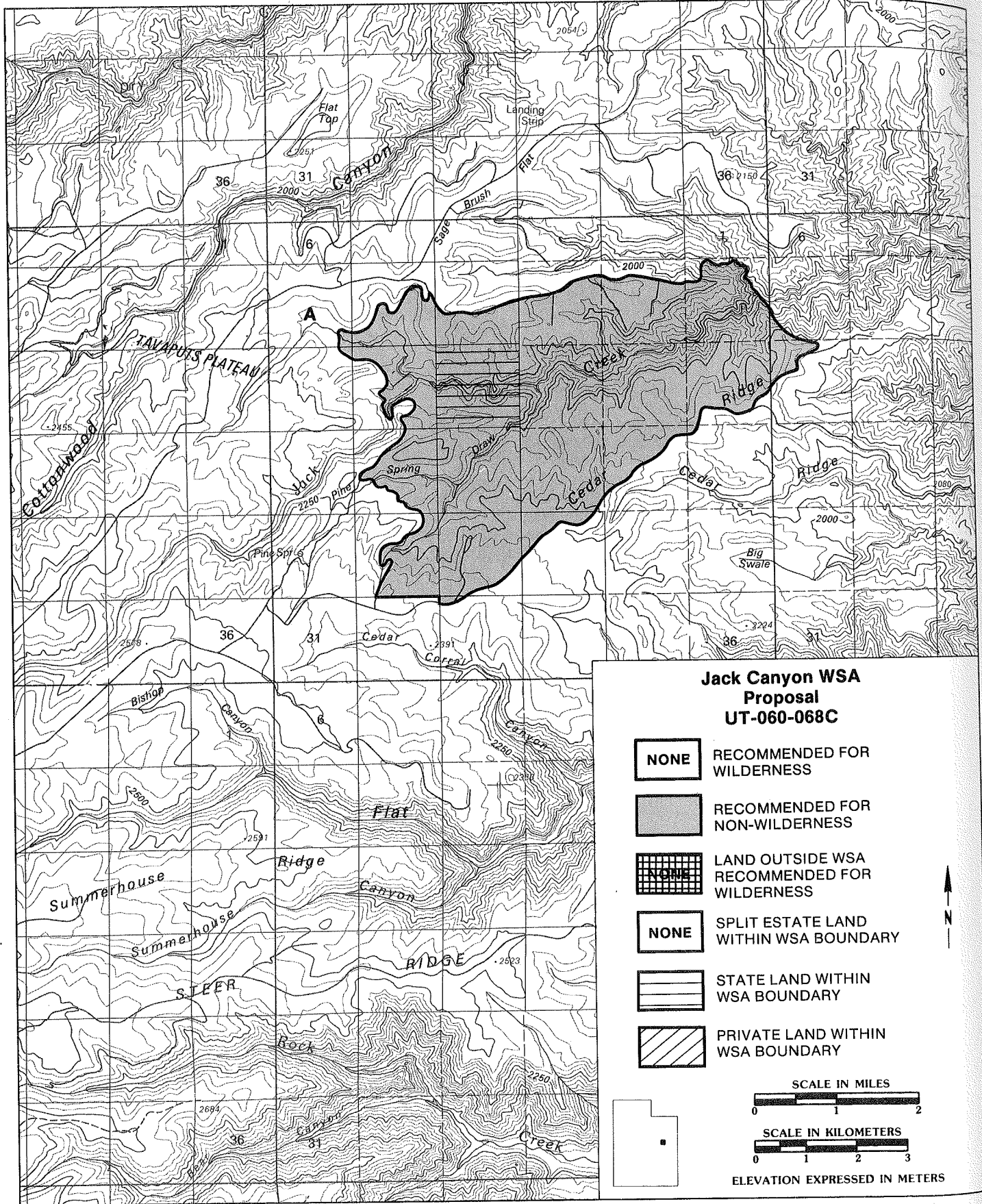
JACK CANYON WSA

R. 15 E.

R. 16 E.

T. 13 S.

T. 14 S.



JACK CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

1. THE STUDY AREA: 7,500 acres

The Jack Canyon Wilderness Study Area (WSA) (UT-060-068C) is in Carbon County, about 15 miles northeast of East Carbon City, Utah (population 1,942) and Sunnyside, Utah (population 611). The unit extends about 6 miles from northeast to southwest and about 4 miles from northwest to southeast. The WSA is separated from the Desolation Canyon WSA (UT-060-068A), to the south and east, by a road along Cedar Ridge and a pipeline route. The western and northern edges of the study area are along roads (see Map). The WSA contains 7,500 acres of public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

One State section (640 acres) and one parcel of private land (40 acres) are inheld within the WSA (see Table 1). The WSA is on the Tavaputs Plateau, a high section of the east-west trending Roan Cliffs. Jack Canyon is a tributary of the Green River, to the east of the WSA.

The terrain in the WSA is characteristic of the highly dissected Roan Cliffs, and includes both vertical-sided and V-shaped canyons, steep tributary draws, and narrow irregular ridges. Elevations range from 5,200 feet in Jack Creek, at the eastern edge of the WSA, to 8,900 feet at the southwestern tip of the WSA.

TABLE 1
LAND STATUS AND ACREAGE SUMMARY IN THE STUDY AREA

WITHIN THE WSA	ACRES
BLM (surface and subsurface)	7,500
Split-Estate (BLM surface only)	0
In-holdings (State, Private)	680
Total	8,180
WITHIN THE RECOMMENDED WILDERNESS BOUNDARY	
BLM (within the WSA)	0
BLM (outside the WSA)	0
Split-Estate (within the WSA)	0
Split-Estate (outside the WSA)	0
Total BLM land recommended for wilderness	0
In-holdings (State, private)	0
WITHIN THE AREA NOT RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS	
BLM	7,500
Split-Estate	0
Total BLM land not recommended for wilderness	7,500
In-holdings (State, Private)	680

Source: BLM File Data

JACK CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

Pinyon-juniper woodland, mixed with sagebrush on the benches and moderate slopes and with Douglas fir on steep slopes and north-facing slopes, is the dominant vegetation.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Utah BLM Statewide Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) finalized in November 1990. Two alternatives were analyzed in the EIS: a no wilderness (no action) alternative which is the recommendation in this report, and an all wilderness alternative.

2. RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE:

0 acres

(recommended for wilderness)

7,500 acres

(not recommended for wilderness)

The recommendation for this WSA is to release the entire area for uses other than wilderness. Designation of the entire area as wilderness is considered to be the environmentally preferable alternative as it would result in the least change from the natural environment over the long term. The alternative selected, however, would be implemented in a manner which would utilize all practical means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts. The WSA would be released for uses other than as wilderness.

Almost all of the WSA is in a natural state and has outstanding opportunities for solitude and the entire area has outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation. Disturbance projected as a result of oil and gas exploration and development will make it very difficult to maintain the wilderness character of the area as described in the manageability section of this document. The WSA has proven reserves of oil and gas with about 63 percent of the study area being within the Greater Jack Canyon Known Geologic Structure. Several leases in and near the WSA have been unitized to form the Peters Point Unit which is held by production. Oil and gas operations began in this area in 1952. The oil and gas resources outweigh wilderness values for this WSA.

3. CRITERIA CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING THE WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATION

Wilderness Characteristics

A. Naturalness

Naturalness is defined as an attribute in which the evidence of man is substantially unnoticeable to the average visitor and where minor imprints of man exhibit no cumulative impact that is substantially noticeable. In all, 7,350 acres meet the naturalness criterion. About 2 percent of the WSA (150 acres), around a drill site access way and pipeline, does not meet the naturalness criterion. The remaining imprints affect another 1 percent of the WSA (75 acres), but these areas meet the naturalness criterion because the imprints are not substantially noticeable in the WSA as a whole.

One area of substantially noticeable imprints within the WSA involves a drill site, access road, and pipeline leading into the WSA from Cedar Ridge. The road is about 0.75 mile long and portions were constructed along side slopes. The drill site is in a grassy opening on a bench between Cedar Ridge and Jack Creek. The site was drilled in 1981 on a pre-FLPMA lease and is currently producing gas. The drill site and road are visible for long distances from the north, and no further reclamation is expected in the near future.

A site in Jack Canyon about a 0.25 mile from the northeast WSA boundary was drilled in 1976. The well produced 11.2 million cubic feet of natural gas before being plugged in 1979. The a 0.25 mile vehicular way to the site is no longer substantially noticeable, but the well site itself noticeably contrasts with the surrounding landscape. Some facilities are still in place and the pad area remains evident. The area affected by this imprint is localized and the imprint is very near the WSA boundary. The site therefore does not impair the naturalness of a significant portion of the WSA when viewed in the area as a whole.

JACK CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

Three old vehicle ways extend into the WSA from the bench road on the northern boundary. An abandoned drill site is along one of these ways. The ways total 1.5 miles. They have generally revegetated. The sections where the ways cut through pinyon-juniper stands are still evident, as is the drill site. These imprints are noticeable in some places, but they are not substantially noticeable in the area as a whole.

B. Solitude

About 97 percent of the WSA (7,275 acres) meets the solitude criterion for areas under wilderness review. In about 3 percent of the WSA (225 acres), along the north and south boundaries, opportunities for solitude are less than outstanding, primarily due to off-site influences.

The combination of distance, configuration, terrain, and vegetation provides solitude in most of the WSA. Vistas can be viewed from edges of plateaus around the boundary of the WSA.

The drainages of Pine Springs Draw and Jack Creek are narrow, sinuous, and steep throughout most of their lengths and are separated by broken and irregular ridge lines. The upper portions of Pine Springs Draw and its forks above 7,000 feet are the most open areas. On the bench areas along the north and south boundaries, the terrain is less severe, but pinyon-juniper provides excellent screening. Several sagebrush areas along boundary roads to the north and south do not provide significant screening.

Vegetation and terrain provide opportunities for solitude in most of the WSA. In 80 percent (6,000 acres) of the WSA, tree cover is a dominant feature in the vegetation. Tree cover in the pinyon-juniper woodland/Douglas fir type often has a closed canopy and is moderate to heavy. Tree cover in the pinyon-juniper woodland/sage community is variable. In most of the locations dominated by these types, trees significantly contribute to opportunities for solitude.

Significant off-site influences are related to past and present oil and gas activity. Oil and gas exploration im-

prints are quite visible from a number of locations along the northern boundary of the WSA. Vehicle use of the Cedar Ridge Road and the road in Jack Canyon occurs on a regular basis to access producing gas wells. Off-site influences generally affect about 3 percent (225 acres) of the WSA, primarily along its boundaries.

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

Generally, the opportunities for primitive recreation are considered outstanding throughout the entire WSA (7,500 acres) for hiking, climbing, hunting, camping, and sightseeing related to the WSA's scenic, geologic, and wildlife features. Horseback riding could occur, but would be limited due to the steep terrain.

D. Special Features

The Jack Canyon WSA is highly scenic when viewed from the canyon bottoms. Variety throughout the WSA, including variety in vegetation, and the existence of erosional remnants and features, creeks and springs, and wildlife habitat all combine in an interesting and scenic landscape. The archaeological potential of the area is largely unknown, but significant sites are known to be present nearby, outside the WSA, in Nine Mile Canyon and Desolation Canyon.

High-value wildlife habitat in the WSA includes the intermittent stream and spring riparian associations in Jack Creek and Pine Springs Draw, and cliff and talus habitats. The WSA has small populations of Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, elk, cougar, and black bear, which are wildlife species associated with wilderness. Peregrine falcons and bald eagles, listed as endangered species, may occasionally visit the WSA and eight other animal species that are considered sensitive also may occur in the WSA. Refer to Appendix 4 and the Affected Environment, Wildlife Including Special Status Species sections of the Utah BLM Statewide Wilderness Final EIS for additional information.

JACK CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

A. Expanding the Diversity of Natural Systems and Features as Represented by Ecosystems

Wilderness designation of this WSA would not add a combination of potential natural vegetation (PNV) ecosystems not presently represented in the NWPS. PNV is the vegetative type that would eventually become climax vegetation if not altered by human interference, and is not necessarily the vegetation that is currently present in an area. The WSA is in the Colorado Plateau Province/Ecoregion. The PNV in the WSA is juniper-pinyon woodland (3,750 acres) and pine-Douglas fir forest (3,750 acres).

Both PNV types are represented in the NWPS nationally and in Utah and in other BLM study areas both in and outside of Utah. This information is summarized in Table 2 from data compiled in December 1989.

B. Assessing the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation within a Days Driving Time (5 Hours) of Major Population Centers

The WSA is within a 5-hour drive of the Salt Lake City-Ogden, Utah and Provo-Orem, Utah, standard metropolitan statistical areas. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated wilderness and other BLM study areas within a 5-hour drive of these population centers.

TABLE 2
ECOSYSTEM REPRESENTATION

	NWPS AREAS		OTHER BLM STUDIES	
	AREAS	ACRES	AREAS	ACRES
BAILEY-KUHLER CLASSIFICATION (PNV)				
NATIONWIDE (COLORADO PLATEAU PROVINCE)				
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	11	1,401,745	84	2,140,255
Pine-Douglas Fir Forest	6	125,523	7	15,182
UTAH (COLORADO PLATEAU PROVINCE)				
Juniper-Pinyon Woodland	1	26,000	53	1,702,448
Pine-Douglas Fir Forest	1	45,000	1	1,490

Source: BLM File Data.

TABLE 3
WILDERNESS OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS OF MAJOR POPULATION CENTERS

POPULATION CENTERS	NWPS AREAS		OTHER BLM STUDIES	
	AREAS	ACRES	AREAS	ACRES
Salt Lake City-Ogden, Utah	11	1,099,962	78	2,252,175
Provo-Orem, Utah	11	721,793	90	2,779,368

Source: BLM File Data.

JACK CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas

The Jack Canyon WSA could contribute significantly to balancing the geographic distribution of wilderness areas within the NWPS. As of January 1987, the NWPS included 44 areas comprising 3,443,330 acres in Utah and Colorado, the adjacent state nearest the WSA.

A Jack Canyon Wilderness would supplement the NWPS in the Uinta Basin Section of the Colorado Plateau where there are no established wilderness areas. There are four designated wilderness areas within 100 miles of the WSA. To the northwest are the 8,922-acre Lone Peak Wilderness (U.S. Forest Service [FS]), the 10,750-acre Mt. Timpanogas Wilderness (FS) and the 28,000-acre Mt. Nebo wilderness (FS), and to the north-northwest is the 456,705-acre High Uintas Wilderness (FS).

Manageability (The area must be capable of being effectively managed to preserve its wilderness character.)

Only portions of the WSA could be managed as wilderness. Livestock grazing would continue but would not significantly affect wilderness values. However, conflicts with two pre-FLPMA oil and gas leases (2,180 acres) held by production and three post-FLPMA oil and gas leases (1,110 acres) could cause significant adverse impacts to the area's wilderness character following wilderness designation. BLM projects that 11 acres could be disturbed by additional oil and gas exploration and development and that up to 3 miles of road could be built. The opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be adversely effected on up to 600 acres of land indirectly impacted by oil and gas exploration activities. One State section (640 acres) and one parcel of private land (40 acres) are located within the WSA. The likelihood of oil and gas exploration and development of the State land is good due to favorable geologic conditions. The State land could create additional manageability problems because BLM would be required to provide reasonable access and would have no control over activities on State land. There are no mining claims in the WSA due to an oil shale withdrawal.

Management of off-highway vehicle (OHV) use would not be a problem because of the rugged terrain of the WSA.

Energy and Mineral Resource Values

Because the WSA is not recommended for wilderness designation, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the U.S. Bureau of Mines (USBM) did not prepare a mineral assessment report for the area. According to BLM geologists, the potential for oil and gas is high, although the total reserves may be moderate because of the small size of the WSA. The potential for coal and tar sand resources is low. The potential for oil shale is moderate. The potential for uranium and other metallic minerals is low. The WSA is within an oil shale withdrawal, which closes the area to mining claim location.

Impacts on Resources

The comparative impact table (Table 4) summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for alternatives considered including designation or nondesignation of the area as wilderness.

Local Social and Economic Considerations

With BLM's recommended no wilderness alternative, there would not be significant changes in economic conditions in Carbon County. Oil and gas exploration and development could increase employment in Carbon County by 0.3 percent (40 jobs). The probability of economic development of minerals, other than oil and gas, is low in the foreseeable future. The WSA could contribute up to \$3,576 annually in local sales related to recreation by the year 2020. Livestock grazing in the WSA could provide \$4,320 per year in livestock sales and \$333 in grazing fees. Oil and gas and leasing fees and royalty payments could contribute between \$15,000 and \$100,000 per year in Federal and State revenues depending on production levels.

Summary of WSA-Specific Comments

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. Comments received during the early stages of the EIS preparation were used to develop significant study issues and

JACK CANYON WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

alternatives for the ultimate management of the WSA.

During formal public review of the Draft EIS, a total of 55 inputs specifically addressing this WSA were received from 53 commenters, including oral statements received at 17 public hearings on the EIS. Each letter or oral testimony was considered to be one input. Duplicate letters or oral statements by the same commenter were not counted as additional inputs or signatures. Each individual was credited with one signature or testimony regardless of the number of inputs. In general, 43 commenters supported wilderness designation for part or all of the WSA, while 3 commenters were opposed. Seven commenters addressed the relative merits of the EIS but took no formal position on wilderness designation.

Those favoring wilderness commented on the opportunities for primitive recreation in the WSA. The majority of those commenting in favor of wilderness were from other states. Of particular concern was that wilderness designation would protect wilderness values and wildlife habitat in the WSA.

Those opposing wilderness were concerned that wilderness would prohibit mineral exploration and development. Those opposing wilderness designation were from urban and rural Utah and from another state.

No Federal agencies commented specifically on the Draft EIS for this WSA.

No comment letters were received on the Final EIS.

There is one State section (640 acres) in the WSA. In commenting on the Draft EIS the State of Utah expressed general opposition to wilderness designation. The State commented that Jack Canyon WSA has low wilderness quality values and moderate conflicts compared to other WSAs in the region, pointing out the current gas production within the WSA. Other comments noted concern that wildlife and livestock values could be enhanced more by the no action alternative due to potential vegetation treatments.

The WSA is in Carbon County. According to the Carbon County Commission the area with the WSA is zoned as Critical Environmental 1 (CE-1) where the land use objectives are to protect water supplies, vegetation, soils, wildlife, aesthetics and other natural resources. The Carbon County Commission is opposed to wilderness designation for the WSA, and has endorsed the Consolidated Local Government Response to Wilderness that opposes wilderness designation of BLM lands in Utah. In commenting on the Draft EIS, the Commission noted that the WSA has substantial oil and gas potential and visible imprints of man's activities. The Commission further stated that the natural values in the area may be protected by county zoning or designation of the WSA as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern by BLM.

JACK CANYON WSA

Table 4
Comparative Summary of Impacts by Alternative^a

Issue Topic	Alternatives	
	Recommendation No Action/No Wilderness	All Wilderness (7,500 Acres)
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Wilderness values would not be protected by wilderness designation and loss would occur as intrusions increase. In the foreseeable future, naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be directly lost on up to 161 acres of the WSA because of oil and gas development and construction of access to a State in-holding. The quality of opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be indirectly reduced on up to an additional 3,750 acres. Endangered or threatened species would not be significantly affected. Class A scenery and wildlife associated with wilderness would be disturbed. Vehicular use of ways and future oil and gas exploration and development roads would occasionally detract from the quality of opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation in the WSA.	Wilderness designation would preserve overall the wilderness values in the WSA. In the foreseeable future, naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be directly lost on 11 acres of the WSA because of oil and gas development and construction of access to State in-holdings. The quality of opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be indirectly reduced on up to an additional 600 acres. Special features would be preserved. Although some Class A scenery would be reduced in quality in the disturbed and surrounding areas.
Impacts on Mineral and Energy Resources	Implementation of this alternative would not adversely affect oil and gas exploration and production in the WSA because leasing and development would not be restricted for protection of wilderness values.	The current production of natural gas from pre-FLPMA leases would not be affected. Production of locally significant but unquantifiable amounts of oil and natural gas would be foregone. There would not be a significant loss of tar sand, oil shale, locatable minerals, or salable minerals within the WSA because the probability of development is low even if the area is not designated wilderness.

JACK CANYON WSA

Table 4 (Continued)
Comparative Summary of Impacts by Alternative

Issue Topic	Alternatives	
	Recommendation No Action/No Wilderness	All Wilderness (7,500 Acres)
Impacts on Wildlife Habitat and Populations	<p>Surface disturbance caused by potential mineral exploration could displace some wildlife species during the lifetime of the disturbance. Additional impacts could occur to sensitive big game species such as elk and bighorn sheep. Impacts on threatened, endangered, or other special status species would not be significant because only 2 percent of the WSA would be disturbed, activities would be temporary and mitigation would be required.</p>	<p>About 0.02 percent of the habitat in the WSA would be disturbed. Wilderness designation would protect wildlife and provide additional solitude. Threatened, endangered, and other special status species would be protected.</p>
Impacts on Economic Conditions	<p>Present economic conditions would not be affected. Oil and gas exploration and development would increase employment in Carbon County by 0.3 percent (40 jobs) as compared to projected employment by the year 2010. There would be only minor changes in local economic conditions. The WSA could contribute up to \$3,576 annually in local sales related to recreation by the year 2020. Livestock grazing in the WSA would continue to provide about \$4,320 per year in livestock sales and \$333 in grazing fees. Oil and gas leasing fees and royalty payments could contribute between \$15,000 and over \$100,000 per year in Federal and State revenues depending on production levels.</p>	<p>The potential for about 0.2 percent of the projected Carbon County employment in the year 2010 (30 jobs), would be foregone. This would not significantly affect local economic conditions. Annual local sales related to recreation could be up to \$2,160 per year by the year 2020. This would be about \$886 less than with the No Action/No Wilderness Alternative. Livestock grazing would continue to contribute about \$4,320 per year in livestock sales and \$333 in Federal revenues. Annual Federal and State revenues from oil and gas leasing fees and royalty payments could be reduced by between \$10,640 and over \$100,000 as compared to the No Action/No Wilderness Alternative.</p>

^a The BLM San Rafael RMP was approved following publication of the BLM Utah Statewide Wilderness EIS. The analysis of impacts summarized here has been modified to reflect the more restrictive resource management practices established by the RMP.